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From: CN=Richard Mylott/OU=R8/O=USEPA/C=US

Sent: Mon 10/1/2012 5:41:10 PM

Subject: CS Tribune editorial: The Pavillion mess

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Casper Star Tribune: The Pavillion mess

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2012-09-30T11:45:00Z 2012-09-29T18:06:12Z FUGLEBERG: The Pavillion mess

By JEREMY FUGLEBERG Star-Tribune business editor trib.com

23 hours ago • By JEREMY FUGLEBERG Star-Tribune business editor

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The two water testing wells in a natural gas field east of Pavillion don't look like much. When not in use, they're both covered by what looks like a large, upturned metal bucket.

Those two wells, along with testing of other drinking water wells nearby, were supposed to prove or debunk a suspected link between natural gas drilling — specifically the hydraulic fracturing method used to get the gas — and contaminants found in the water of some of those who live in the gas field.

It still might, but I wonder how much it'll matter to those outside the field. I'm getting the feeling the world has walked past the Pavillion case. It's too messy, too complex, and won't provide enough ammunition for anybody on either side of the debate over the use of the practice also known as fracking.

It's certainly been a well-publicized, pitched battle. Late last year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency release a report that did in fact make the case for a tentative link, pending more research. Of course, all those caveats don't matter to those certain fracking harms water supplies, and the EPA report was hailed as definitive proof.

Predictably, and with some evidence to make their case, industry representatives and even some state

officials questioned the EPA methods and its results and called for additional testing.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Geological Survey released its test results from those test wells — the ones you would likely miss if you drove by them on the roads that cut through the gas field.

The report, essentially a list of water test results without a conclusion, provided something for everyone, and media coverage reflected that. The comment period on the EPA draft ends in a couple of weeks, so I'm sure there will be more news stories about the tests.

If an ultimate conclusion is reached, it'll also be news. You'll certainly read about it in this paper. And the results will certainly matter to those in the Pavillion area trying to get answers about their water.

But here are my highly simplified predictions of the Pavillion's final score in terms of the PR game — the war for minds:

n Anti-frackers: Pavillion proved fracking harms groundwater. Yes, the process was messy and there were some flaws in the testing, but the EPA's initial conclusion was sound. Case closed. Let's move on.

n Frackers: Pavillion proved nothing. The EPA was politically motivated, its process fundamentally flawed and its results useless to prove anything else. Let's move on.

It won't be that easy to draw simple conclusions for those within Wyoming's borders. State and tribal officials, the landowners and Encana, the field's operator, will continue to grapple with the problem, even after testing and international headlines focus on some other part of the world.

After all, fracking has already hit Hollywood.

This last week I watched the trailer for Promised Land, a movie about fracking starring Matt Damon and due to hit theaters in December, just in time for Oscar season. It looks dramatic, interesting, scary and will likely be outrageously disconnected from facts.

It'll also likely do more to drive public perception of fracking than any two wells nestled in a beautiful part of Wyoming that is home to some residents with bad water.

That's shouldn't come as a surprise. But it's still a shame.

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